

children (especially the older ones), or an adult, shows that it now has value for him.

These considerations suggest that the motive of possession is not to be regarded as an atomic psychological unit, one of the irreducible "instincts" of original human nature. To think of it so is to miss its most significant aspects, viz. its intimate relation with the motives of power and rivalry. It is essentially a *social* response, not a mere direct reaction to the physical objects which may serve individual purposes.

Even in the least complicated situation, where the value of the thing owned is intrinsic, as the means of satisfying some (primary or derived) personal need, the actual wish to own it can only be understood in terms of power—or, rather, of *powerlessness*. I want to own it because if I do not it may not be there when I need it, and my need will go unsatisfied. If another has it, he may keep it for ever. If I am at the mercy of another's will for the satisfaction of my need, I am helpless before it. Only by having the means of satisfaction of my need *as mine*, mine to have and to hold, can I feel safe.

The ultimate situation from which the wish to own arises is, of course, that of the infant at the breast, whose satisfactions are indeed at the mercy of another's will. It is to the infant's sense of helplessness before the urgency of his own desires for love and nourishment, and the equally helpless rage stirred by the denial of immediate satisfaction for his desires, that we have to look for an understanding of the imperious wish of the child to *own*. If the source of pleasure is *his*, he is safe against both outer and inner dangers—the danger of frustration, and the danger of helpless desire and rage. Mere *having* thus becomes an end in itself for the child just beyond the distresses of infancy.

It is this early prototypic situation that gives

the key to the ultimate meaning of ownership. In the last resort, one's possessions are felt to be extensions of *the self*, as William James long ago pointed out. What is mine becomes (in my feeling) a part of *ME*. The truth" of this is obvious to anyone who reflects upon his own feelings and the behaviour of other people. The degree to which (among adults) one's belongings are felt as a part of oneself varies with their nature and one's own—to one person, her clothes, to another, his tools, to a third, his money, to a fourth, books or garden. The psycho-analytic study of children and adults shows that